

Toxic Music or True Christian Worship?

by Jeremy James



David playing before Saul

A vital key to Christian worship

The last verse of the last Psalm holds a vital key to Christian worship:

**"Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD.
Praise ye the LORD."
(Psalm 150:6)**

It is no surprise that the Hebrew word for 'breath' is also the Hebrew word for 'Spirit'.

Breath and praise go together. When the enemies of Daniel sought occasion to denounce him before Darius, they gathered outside his room to eavesdrop on his prayers. The king had ordered that, over a period of thirty days, anyone who made a petition to any man or god, save to the king himself, would be thrown to the lions. Clearly, this wicked cabal knew that Daniel prayed aloud in his apartment three times a day and that his petitions to the LORD God of heaven and earth were audible to bystanders. It was on this basis that they conspired to persuade the king to enact this absurd law in the first place.

How often should we praise the LORD? The Bible tells us:

**"From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same
the LORD'S name is to be praised."
(Psalm 113:3)**

The Psalmist refers elsewhere to the continuity of praise:

**"I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise
shall continually be in my mouth."
(Psalm 34:1)**

The author of Hebrews likens this continual praise to a continual sacrifice:

**"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise
to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips
giving thanks to his name."
(Hebrews 13:15)**

These are immensely important verses since they point to something that every born-again believer should be doing continually. They also show how praise and thanksgiving are intimately connected.

The Enemy wants us to misconstrue the nature of praise, as though God was deficient in some respect and needed our praise. The fallen angels crave attention and crudely imagine that God must be the same. But He is not! Rather, praise is the glorious means by which we relate to our heavenly Father. Through it we come to know Him more and more. Through it we are blessed with a joy that we would not otherwise know in our fallen condition.

We do this through our voice, our breath! The most powerful prayer is vocal, not simply an unspoken thought in the silence of our minds. And praise too is vocal. As the Psalmist says, the sacrifice of praise is the fruit of our lips. We thank God daily from the bottom of our hearts and we show the sincerity of our words by vocalising them. Even if this vocalisation is only a whisper, it is far more pleasing to God than an unspoken thought in the silence of our mind.



Miriam and the Israelite women celebrate at the Red Sea

The Psalms are songs of praise to God. Through them the LORD reveals how we are to approach Him. Whether we come in joy or in sorrow, in gratitude or in grief, in bewilderment or in contentment, the Psalms trace out a path that is acceptable to God. They teach us how to pray and how to praise, how to express ourselves spiritually before the Living God, how to unburden our hearts with love, gratitude and respect.

Breath is central to praise and worship! The same Hebrew word designates both breath and Spirit. It is almost impossible to think of any of the prophets praying to God and not employing their lips in praise and exaltation.

The saints in heaven who surround the throne of God express their loving relationship with their Creator through song, the sacrifice of their lips, in continual praise. They also employ a musical instrument, presumably as a means of expressing something additional or individual in their offering. Assembled in joy and celebration, the collective sound of these voices, with harps resonating in harmonious accord, must be truly stunning.

The Word of God reveals this, notably in the Book of Revelation, not simply as an activity in the throne room of God, but as an experience beyond anything our little minds can comprehend. Through their worship these saints are receiving something inexpressible from God, something we can barely imagine in our fallen human condition.

Let's now examine the musical instruments that were used in Biblical times, both in Temple worship and in everyday life.



The first musical instruments

The Word of God tells us that the first musical instruments were invented by Jubal of the line of Cain:

**"And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father
of all such as handle the harp and organ."
(Genesis 4:21)**

The words which the KJV translates as "harp" and "organ" are *kinnor* (H3658) and *uwgab* (H5748), respectively. These correspond with what we understand today as the lyre and the simple flute. The lyre was an early type of harp, while the flute (in this instance) was a variety of pipe, akin to a flageolet or recorder.

However, it should be noted that the third from Seth (and therefore earlier than Jubal) was Mahalaleel, whose name means **"giving praise to God."** This tells us that the godly line of Seth was worshipping God with their voices in song before the lyre and flute were invented.

This is very important since it tells us that the worship of God through the medium of the human voice alone, without instrumental support of any kind, is worship in the full Biblical sense. The name of Mahalaleel was first mentioned in Genesis 5:13, while we are told in Genesis 4:26 that men "**began to call upon the name of the LORD**" when Enos, the son of Seth was born. Enos was the grandfather of Mahalaleel (The name Enos means 'mankind'). Therefore men were giving praise to God in an organized manner, without instrumentation, about 250 years or so after God created Adam.

There is a principle of Bible interpretation known as 'the law of first mention'. This requires that special weight be given to the first time a word or concept is used in Scripture since the Holy spirit will not state anything thereafter that conflicts with the first mention. If we respect this basic principle of Bible interpretation we will recognize that the worship of God exclusively through the human voice is worship in every sense. Nothing is lacking.

The genealogy in Genesis confirms that Mahalaleel was born several generations before Jubal and that therefore vocal worship – which was fully acceptable to God – had long been established before the first musical instrument was invented, possibly by 200 years or more (allowing about 70 years for each of the three generations that separated Mahalaleel from Jubal):

	Godly line of Seth			Ungodly line of Cain
1	ADAM	- begat Seth at 130		ADAM
2	SETH	- begat Enos at 105		CAIN
3	Enos	- begat Cainan at 90		Enoch
4	Cainan	- begat Mahalaleel at 70		Irada
5	MAHALALEEL	- begat Jared at 65		Mehujael
6	Jared	- begat Enoch at 162		Methusael
7	Enoch	- begat Methuselah at 65		Lamech
8	Methuselah			JUBAL

When Jesus sang a hymn with the Apostles in the Upper Room (Matthew 26:30), was their worship deficient in any respect? Of course not! This is further proof, if proof were needed, that sung worship is fully acceptable and pleasing to God. No instrumentation is required.

Instruments used in Temple worship

Only a small number of musical instruments featured in Temple worship. This is made abundantly clear from the numerous references in the Psalms to the two which exceeded all others in importance – the harp and the psaltery (The harp is sometimes referred to as “an instrument of ten strings”):

Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. (33:2)

Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. (43:4)

Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. (57:8)

Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. (108:2)

I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. (71:22)

Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. (92:3)

Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. (98:5)

I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. (144:9)

Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: (147:7)

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. (150:3)



Statue of David in Jerusalem
“the sweet psalmist of Israel” - 2 Samuel 23:1

The specific instruments to be used in Temple worship were prescribed by David. They comprised the harp and psaltery, which figure to prominently in the Psalms, along with the cymbals and, where appropriate, the silver trumpet [*chatsotsērah*] or ram's horn trumpet [*shofar*]:

“And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.” (1 Chronicles 15:16)

“Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet [*shofar*], and with trumpets [*chatsotsērah*], and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.” (1 Chronicles 15:28)

“Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-edom: and Jeiel with psalteries and with harps; but Asaph made a sound with cymbals; Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God.” (1 Chronicles 16:5-6)

“Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals:” (1 Chronicles 25:1)

“All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.” (1 Chronicles 25:6)



The Shofar

It is obvious that these verses are not simply giving a general description of Temple worship, but a detailed account of the instruments that were acceptable before God during Temple worship. This fixed ensemble was reaffirmed about three hundred years later in the time of king Hezekiah:

“And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets [*chatsotsērah*].” (2 Chronicles 29:25-26)

Again this is very clear, is it not? Indeed, subsequent traumatic events did not change it. When the Temple was rebuilt over two hundred years later by Ezra and Nehemiah, and Temple worship restored, exactly the same fixed set of instruments was prescribed:

“And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets [*chatsotsērah*], and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.” (Ezra 3:10)

“And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps.” (Nehemiah 12:27)

It is important to note that this arrangement would have continued to the time of Christ, even to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. [A review of musical instruments used in Biblical times may be found in **Appendix A.**]

It should be noted that two musical instruments in common use at that time – the flute and the tambourine – did not feature in Temple worship. As is often the case in God's Word, we are not told why this was so. The fact remains that Scripture clearly specifies the musical instruments that were approved by God for use in Temple worship.

We would remind the reader that the covering cherub, Lucifer, is described as follows by Ezekiel: “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.” (28:13). It is significant that the two musical instruments which were prepared in him the day he was created – the tambourine (tabrets) and the flute (pipes) – are excluded from Temple worship.



David playing the psaltery

Worship in context

Much confusion arises when 'worship' is framed too rigidly and rules are made for one situation that cannot reasonably apply in another. Based on the various situations described in the Psalms, we can identify four distinct occasions of worship:

1. Personal worship by the individual in his or her home.

Worship can form part of our personal daily prayers to God. We tend to forget this. It is doubtful whether many believers today sing to the LORD in their prayers, but the Word of God clearly invites us to do so:

“I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.” (77:6)

“Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.” (149:5)

The saints today would have much greater joy in their lives, not to mention greater spiritual strength, if they sang praises to God in their own homes!

2. Festive worship among fellow believers.

The LORD called His people to Jerusalem three times a year, for the feast of Unleavened Bread, for the feast of Shavuot (Pentecost), and for the Feast of Succot (Tabernacles). The first and the third lasted seven days each. The only day in the year on which they were asked “to afflict their souls” was the annual feast of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). With this one exception the feasts of Israel were joyful, festive occasions. They were an uplifting time when the nation of Israel came together as the chosen children of God and celebrated their special relationship with the LORD of all creation.

Much of this celebration would have taken place outside the Temple precincts and would not have been subject to the rules of Temple worship. Nevertheless it would have constituted a gentle, somewhat impromptu, form of worship, as the following passages reveal, and could include both tambourines [timbrel/tabret] and flutes, as well as dancing:

“The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.” (68:25)

“Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.” (81:2)

“Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.” (149:3)

“Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs [*i.e a set of connected pipes*].” (150:4)

3. Formal local worship, as in a synagogue.

The weekly Sabbath service would have observed the rules of Temple worship, with few instruments and a strong emphasis on congregational singing;

“Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.” (33:3)

“Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.”
(47:6)

The word “loud” is mentioned three times in the Psalms in reference to singing and instrumental playing, each time with a different Hebrew word. It does not mean simply to sing or play loudly, but to do so in a joyous, heartfelt manner.

4. Temple worship.

The rules of Temple worship have already been discussed. The only instruments permitted were the harp, psaltery, cymbals, shofar and silver trumpet. There was neither brass nor percussion, neither flute nor tambourine. Furthermore we know that the entire instrumental ensemble was relatively small, comprising just 27 players at the time of David (see 1 Chronicles 25:1-6 which names each of the players and their respective roles). Given the vast throng of worshippers that might fill the Temple during a service, this was a really small number. It shows that the entire act of praise and worship centered around Levitical singing, supported where required by an instrumental ensemble. The congregation may also have had a limited, possibly responsorial input – see Psalm 136.



David dancing before the Ark

The Psalms as a pattern for true worship

The Bible devotes an entire book to a study of sacred song and instrumental worship. The Psalms are no doubt intended to provide believers with a pattern for worship that is both acceptable and pleasing to God. For this reason we have selected a number of verses from the Psalms that expound upon the character and content of sacred music – these may be found in **Appendix B**.

If we examine these we will find a number of important principles which ought to inform all true Christian worship.

- worship brings a blessing

Since the joy of worship is mentioned so often in the Psalms, it ought to be abundantly clear to all believers that worship and praise are a blessing on the believer. Two verses point directly to this truth:

“Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.” (135:3)

“Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.” (147:1)

Praise of God is good, pleasant and comely (agreeable). It blesses the believer and does something very special for our benefit. In short, true worship – worship as God intended – is immensely beneficial.

- songs of praise are anchored in God's Word

The Psalmist links praise directly to the Word of God:

“In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust” (56:4)

“In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word.” (56:10)

We are told also that praise and worship, when grounded in God's Word, is sweeter than honey and more desirable than gold:

“I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.” (119:162)

“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (119:103)

“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” (19:10)



- worship is subject to rules

The Enemy has long tried to convince man that worship should be free of rules and restrictions. The wicked sneer at true Christian worship. Frankly, it disgusts them. They know the strength it gives the believer and resent it bitterly. So they continually invent new ways of doing things, hoping believers will be deceived thereby and led astray.

Here are some basic principles (“rules”) of true Christian worship, all of which may be found in the Psalms:

1. Worship always embodies an expression of thanksgiving

Even when we are truly troubled or burdened with grief, we approach God always with a grateful heart:

“Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God” (147:7)

“I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.” (69:30)

2. Worship requires our best

All can sing before God! That said, every pastor has the task of raising the standard as best he can. Worship must always be imbued with the deepest respect:

“Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.” (33:3)

3. Worship must be conducted with understanding

The Psalmist tells us that we must praise God with understanding:

“For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.” (47:7)

It is impossible to praise God in a language we don't understand, or by using repetitive phrases which convey no clear sense. If worship is grounded in God's Word, as it should be, then it must have the same clarity and rationality that we find in God's Word. This is one of the most violated principles in modern worship. As the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians in no uncertain terms, all things must be done in an orderly and sober fashion: “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord...Let all things be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:37 & 14:40)

4. Worship must be heartfelt

The Enemy has tricked many in the church today into believing that heartfelt sincerity must be demonstrated by excitement or that true feeling must overflow into visible emotion. The Charismatic and Pentecostal movements are enslaved by this mentality. The Word of God requires that we be completely sincere and fully engaged in the act of worship, as a child singing – lovingly and respectfully – to his father. When trance-like rhythms and self-indulgent emotion take over, both love and respect are absent.

The Psalmist tells us to worship aloud, with all our strength, joyfully, and with our whole heart, while tempering all that we do with respectful solemnity:

“Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.” (81:1)

“O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.” (95:1)

“I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.” (138:1)

“Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.” (92:3)

What makes worship possible?

There are many serious misunderstandings about music in the church today. Some of these can be traced to a misunderstanding about worship. Since few take the time to study the Word of God as they should, or even believe what it says in all matters relating to music and worship, large numbers of sincere believers have been led astray. They mistakenly believe the songs they are singing and the music they are making are an acceptable offering to God. How shocked they would be to read the following:

"In biblical worship, only one offering counts, and that is the offering made once for all by the eternal Son of God on Calvary's Cross. Nothing should be thought of as an acceptable offering, or as having any worship merit, apart from Calvary. Our thoughts and words are not an 'offering', but expressions of praise, thanksgiving, repentance, supplication, dedication and obedience, all made acceptable by Calvary." - Peter Masters, *Worship in the Melting Pot*, p.19

Many would throw up their hands and insist that they already knew that! But did they? Alas, the state of contemporary Christian music shows that the vast majority of professing Christians today have long forgotten that the ONLY acceptable offering before God is the offering made by Christ on Calvary. All we are doing in worship – and all we can possibly do – is to rejoice before the LORD in all that Christ has achieved on our behalf.



Alas it is very difficult to find a church today where this is understood. And if it is not understood, it is not being put into practice. The sweet spiritual communion that comes through selfless praise and worship is largely unknown in most congregations today. Many are content instead with the emotional elevation that comes from singing soothing and familiar songs in a group setting, most of which ignore the Word of God and deal in the main with mundane personal issues and aspirations.

The Enemy has tricked millions of professing believers into accepting a counterfeit form of worship. In doing so he has invested his simulacrum with savory contemporary elements that appeal to our senses and evoke the emotions and gentle sentiments that make us feel loved and accepted. Be assured, dear reader – he knows what he's doing! The entire music industry exists, at least in part, to condition and program our minds to receive and take pleasure in sounds, rhythms and chord sequences that are largely incompatible with true Christian worship.

Essential features of Biblical Worship

Before we look more closely at what is happening in the church today, we will review briefly the essential elements in Biblical worship that we have identified so far:

1. We worship before God by rejoicing in all that Christ has achieved on our behalf. The offering made by Christ on Calvary is the only offering acceptable to God.
2. Worship is conducted through the human voice, augmented where appropriate by a small set of musical instruments.
3. Worship consists of words, spoken or sung.
4. Worship is grounded in the Word of God and possesses the same clarity and rationality that we find in God's Word.
5. Worship is heartfelt, solemn, respectful, and joyous, filled at all times with gratitude for the glorious works of God.

There is nothing controversial about any of these. All may be deduced without difficulty from the Biblical passages already cited. And yet most churches today disregard or violate at least one of them.

Modern Musical Instruments

The question naturally arises: How well do modern musical instruments approximate to those used in Biblical times – do they meet the standard set by God?

The usual answer today goes broadly as follows: Since musical instruments are neutral, we can use whichever we choose, provided they are played to the required standard of excellence. The 'rules' of the Old Testament were part of the Law and are not applicable today. Many styles of music are acceptable to God. What matters is the condition of our heart and the sincerity and fervor of our worship.

Most 'musical directors' would agree with these points, but they are wrong on all four. Let's see why.

1. Musical instruments differ in their physiological effects. This has been demonstrated again and again in the laboratory. Certain sounds raise our blood pressure, while others reduce it. Some are conducive to sleep, while others act as a stimulant. Some are soothing and some are jarring. Could anything be more obvious? And yet the myth that instruments are neutral still persists.

2. The musical rules of the Old Testament are not found in the books of the law. They are not akin to the dietary laws which applied only to Old Testament believers. They remain as relevant today as when the Word of God imparted them to mankind.
3. A musical style is a set of acoustic patterns and techniques that together define a genre. While we cannot say what 'style' of music was played during worship in Biblical times, we can say that it must have conformed with the book of Psalms. This shows that only one 'style' was ever employed.
4. The heart alone cannot guide us in deciding what ought to be pleasing to God. The Bible tells us that “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). It generally seeks only to please itself. Proverb 18:2 could well stand as a definition of contemporary Christian music: “A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.”

We must approach God on His terms, not ours. If He has set out standards and guidelines for worship – no matter where they may be found in His Word – it is incumbent on us to search them out, study them carefully, and apply them.

The Word of God clearly tells us that where musical instruments are used in worship they should comprise only the following: harp, psaltery, cymbals, and trumpet. Neither a flute nor a drum were used in Temple worship – so they should not be used today in our church service.



The silver trumpets

We also know from references in the Bible to cymbals and trumpets – whether *shofar* or silver trumpet – that they were used by only in certain circumstances (notably the silver trumpets) or served mainly as a means of keeping time (the cymbals).

Both the harp and the psaltery were stringed instruments with a resonating cavity. The harp was plucked, while the psaltery was probably struck. The Word of God mentions an “instrument of ten strings” which, as we noted earlier, would appear to be a harp.

Having regard to their tonal range, the modern instruments that would seem to meet this generic definition are: the harp, the violin, the viola, the cello, the acoustic guitar, the zither/dulcimer, and the piano.

In listing these instruments we are not trying to be prescriptive. We simply wish to show how Biblical principles can and should be applied in our modern world.

Most churches today are using a piano and standard guitar in worship. This would seem to be fully consistent with what the LORD has asked us to do.

Other churches include a drum of some kind – which is not Biblical.

And many are now using an instrument which violates nearly every principle of Biblical worship – the electric guitar.

To understand why the electric guitar is so harmful to Christian worship, we need to go back and identify the element, if any, that is common to all Biblical instruments. This common element is so obvious that we may not even notice it – in the case of every musical instrument approved by God, the music or sound originates in the air. This might hardly seem like a characteristic worth noting since the Israelites had no means of generating sound other than through direct contact with the air – whether by blowing, plucking, shaking or striking. However, its significance leaps off the page in an age where another possibility exists.

Breath

To fully appreciate why this matters, we must look at the exceptional spiritual potency of 'breath' in God's Word:

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”
(Genesis 2:7)

“The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” (Job 33:4)

The Word of God connects breath with life itself. Man has breath because God breathed life into him!

When we worship God we engage in the most exalted of all human activities. And we do so through our breath!

The Word of God itself is God-breathed! This is why it is central to Christian worship.

The angels too were made by God's breath:

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” (Psalm 33:6)

The Word of God reminds us that our next breath is in His hands, that we continue to live and breathe solely through His gracious will and infinite mercy:

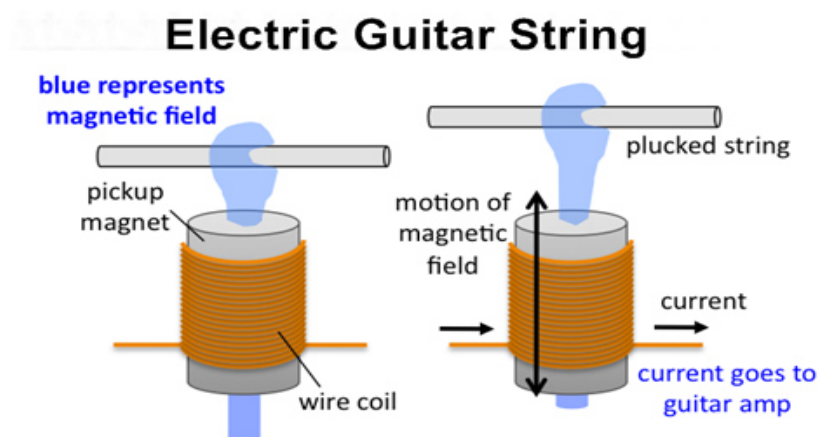
“In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.” (Job 12:10)

Neither can we forget that, in the fullness of time, “with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” (Isaiah 11:4)

All of the musical instruments of Christian worship create sound through their impact on the air around them. Even our voice! Our breath and our worship are intimately connected.

The Electric Guitar

The electric guitar was invented in the 1940s and acquired its modern form in the 1950s. It comprises a fretted stringed instrument which uses a simple electromagnetic device to convert metallic vibrations into sound. This device is known as a magnetic pickup. In accordance with a principle known as electromagnetic induction, the vibrating steel strings induce a weak electrical current in the pickup. The slightest movement in the string generates a corresponding electrical impulse which can be converted into sound through a loudspeaker. Since the electrical signal is generally too weak to feed the loudspeaker, a booster device known as an amplifier is used to increase the strength of the electrical impulses.



We can see from this that an electric guitar has two sound-generating sources, namely the pickup, which turns metallic vibrations into an ever-changing sequence of electrical impulses, and an amplifier, which can be designed to modify the electrical impulses in a specific way, thereby altering the sound produced by the loudspeakers.

The player does not produce any sound. Rather, he produces vibrations in a set of steel strings. Neither the air around the instrument nor the structure of the instrument have any material effect on the vibrations. An electric guitar would still give much the same sound if played in a vacuum. Equally, its strings would produce much the same vibration even if they were attached to a concrete block.

The sound itself is produced by the loudspeaker. This 'sound' is the original sound. It is not an amplified version of an antecedent sound. The name 'amplifier' is often misunderstood since many mistakenly assume that it amplifies a pre-existing sound, but it doesn't. It only amplifies an electrical signal. The 'voice' of an electric guitar is not in the guitar at all, but in the loudspeaker.

The term 'electric guitar' is a misnomer. It is not a modified or 'electrical' form of acoustic guitar or anything of the kind, but a set of steel strings linked to three separate electromagnetic components: the pickup (many electric guitars have up to four pickups), the amplifier, and the loudspeaker.

The so-called electric guitar is not a musical instrument at all but an early form of electronic sound synthesizer consisting of four components. Academics from the University of Massachusetts stated the following in a paper published in 2013 by the Acoustical Society of America :

The electric guitar is a complex mechanical, electrical, and acoustic system, invented less than a century ago. While more traditional instruments such as voices and violins, trumpets and tympani, piano and piccolo might possess innate traits that most listeners easily identify, the electric guitar is a sound synthesizer capable of a vast range of sounds. The guitar, the amp, and the recording techniques used enable the performer and the engineer to define and refine elements of tone, almost without limit. The electric guitar has no single reference tone quality, but instead invites, and even inspires performers and recordists to create new sounds and explore alternative timbres as desired.

**[*Electric Guitar - A Blank Canvas for Timbre and Tone*
by Case, Roginska, Mathew, and Anderson.]**

Indeed its great appeal lies in the fact that it is not a musical instrument, but a portable, low-cost means of generating an extremely wide range of synthetic sounds, most of which cannot be produced by any other means and which have no natural or instrumental equivalent.

The electric guitar – or portable steel-string synthesizer – is a revolutionary device since it frees the performer from the acoustic limitations of natural instruments. A large proportion of the sounds that it produces are completely alien to the world we know around us. Its sonic effects are both novel and unpredictable, capable of cutting sharply into our emotions, changing our mood, and disrupting our normal physiological state.

Rock guitarists strive to develop a personal sound by using pickups and other devices with distinctive electronic characteristics, as well as a personalised amplifier that 'distorts' or adds 'coloration' to the input signal. It is sometimes impossible for one rock guitarist to reproduce the work of another unless he knows which devices and settings were used in the original. Even then, it may not be possible because the original amplifier had an unusual defect which imparted a distinctive coloration to the sound.



Solid-body “Log” guitar by Les Paul, made from a 4x4 wooden post to which a timber neck and pickups were attached. The curved sides were for appearance only.

From all this we can see that the electric guitar has nothing in common with the musical instruments approved in God's Word. It does not have a fixed timbre. It does not have a fixed tonal palette. It does not emit a readily identifiable reproducible sound. It is capable of producing an almost unlimited range of sounds, most of which are discordant and alien to human experience. It is not even a single 'instrument' but four unrelated components, only one of which is 'played' by the performer. And last of all, it has no 'breath' – all of its sounds are synthetic.

Satan's Sound Machine

It is hardly surprising that such a strange device should cause a revolution in music. Rock and Roll would never have started without it. Modern rock music is substantially a product of the electric guitar. An industry that revels in its rebellious, iconoclastic attitude is fuelled by sounds that only a portable synthesizer can produce. It is impossible to envisage a rock concert without an electric guitar.

Christians need to consider these simple facts very carefully: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). If the most popular expression of rebellion in the world today – the ubiquitous rock concert – depends on this unnatural device, then what place can it possibly have in the church of God?

It belongs rightly in the church of Satan. Rock concerts celebrate everything that the powers of darkness want to promote among young people. The strange sounds produced at these events enter into their minds and hearts and change them spiritually. Satan understands the chemistry of sound! He is able to use it like an acoustic tool to cut through the delicate moral fibers that restrain our fallen nature.

It is astonishing that so many Christian pastors have almost no understanding of the spiritual damage caused by rock music. In their ignorance they even allow the principal instrument of its destructive work to enter the church and – incredibly – to be used in worship!

Luciferians are thrilled with the inexplicable ignorance of these supposedly Christian pastors. A tool that these agents of Satan have used mightily over the past sixty years to undermine society and subvert our children is now being used widely in Christian worship! They are helped in this wicked enterprise, not only by the bewildering ignorance of undiscerning pastors, but by the widespread acceptance of rock music generally within society.



David Bowie, 1973

“Rock has always been the devil's music. You can't convince me that it isn't... I honestly believe everything that I've said. I believe that rock & roll is dangerous. It could well bring about a very evil feeling in the West... And that's where I see it heading, bringing about the dark era... I feel that we're only heralding something even darker than ourselves.”

**- David Bowie, interview in
Rolling Stone, February 12, 1976.**

Here is how one Luciferian exulted in the influence that the powers of darkness can exert through the electric guitar:

“There is a collective, magickal and spiritual significance attached to the Electric Guitar. For the Spiritual Guitarist, it is the numinous Instrument of Lucifer, the Hammer of Thor, the Thunderbolt of Zeus, the Caduceus of Hermes, the Sword of the Warrior, the Stone of the Philosophers, and the Wand of the Magician. It has become the major Weapon of Sound in Musick and a dynamic symbol for the Spirit of Freedom and Independence since around the middle of the 20th Century, and it will continue to do so into the future!” - David Cherubim, *The Spiritual Guitar Guide*, 2003

Mark those words well! The Luciferians know just how much damage they can do through music, provided they have to hand an instrument that can make the necessary synthetic sounds. Naive and gullible Christians have no understanding of this! They ignore God's Word and foolishly imitate the ways of the world.

Satanists know that, when used in a certain way, music can be used to summon demons. Rock guitarists do this all the time. By the same token, music of the right kind will drive demons away. The Bible refers to this in the first book of Samuel, where David played on the harp and caused the evil spirit to depart from Saul:

“And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.” (1 Samuel 16:23)

Our churches today are being infiltrated by seemingly upright people who serve the powers of darkness. Nothing pleases them more than to confuse and mislead God's people. They promote poor Bible translations, contemporary Christian music, fads and fashions of every kind, popular speakers, new age practices, ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, moral ambivalence, experimental worship, meditation, yoga, and much else besides. One of their main aims is to undermine and destroy true Christian worship. They know the strength and joy that Christians draw from Biblically based worship, and they hate it. They rightly celebrate the day a church starts using an electric guitar.

Electronic Keyboards

We must draw attention to another implication for the modern church of the rules and guidelines set out so clearly in God's Word. For many years churches have been replacing pianos with electronic keyboards. This is wrong! Pianos have a natural sound, while electronic keyboards do not. Like the electric guitar, the electronic keyboard is a sound synthesizer, not a musical instrument. However, they are not nearly as damaging as electric guitars since their tonal range is fixed. Nevertheless, they conflict with God's Word and should be thrown out.

This is probably more than many professing Christians can bear: "Hey, he actually wants us to get rid of our electronic keyboard!" No, 'he' wants you to obey God's Word – and His Word makes it abundantly clear that synthetic music is not acceptable in worship. Since that is the case, electronic keyboards should be replaced by a piano.

CONCLUSION

How many pastors will take this advice? How many will set aside their longheld opinions and go back and check exactly what God has asked us to do? How many will admit they were mistaken and humbly ask the LORD to set them on the right path? Not very many, I suspect. In my experience, the deadly hold exercised by rock music on so many people today is not easily broken. The spirit of rock music, the spirit of the electric guitar, is the spirit of rebellion.

We have already addressed aspects of this rebellion and its impact on music and worship in the church – see our earlier papers: **Choral Chaos: How CCM is Undermining and Destroying True Christian Worship** (#88) and **CCM, Hillsong, and the Organized Assault on True Christian Worship** (#99). [Note: CCM means 'Contemporary Christian Music'.]

Alas, many of our churches today are in rebellion against God. His Word is given second place. The guiding standard in most matters is the prevailing orthodoxy. Often the difference is hard to see, but it's there nonetheless. Few pastors have the courage to take a stand on anything!

This is far closer to witchcraft and darkness than most believers seem to realize. Man's standards and expectations are fluid and flexible, but God's are not. He has told us what He wants us to do, and it behoves us to rejoice and do it!

The sad reality is that unwavering obedience to God's Word is almost unknown in most churches today. Countless leaders are finding ways to interpret God's Word to their own advantage. Remember Samuel's sharp rebuke to Saul when he tried to do this:

**“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken
than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as
the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness
is as iniquity and idolatry.”
(1 Samuel 15:22-23)**

Saul should have destroyed all of the Amalekites, including their king, Agag. But he didn't. How did Samuel react to all of this? He took a knife and cut Agag to pieces.

The prophet Amos spoke explicitly about the false worship that had entered Israel in his day. The rebellious leaders had stopped using the musical instruments approved by God – known as the instruments of David – and had invented instruments to suit themselves:

**“That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves
instruments of musick, like David”
(Amos 6:5)**

The church today should reflect deeply on the words of Samuel and Amos!

**Jeremy James
Ireland
June 26, 2017**

For further information visit www.zephaniah.eu

APPENDIX A

Musical Instruments in Biblical Times

Kinnor [KJV 'harp'] (H3658)

A simple hardwood lyre with several strings. The strings were plucked rather than struck. The instrument was seemingly small enough to be held in one hand and played with the other.

Ugab [KJV 'organ'] (H5748)

A long pipe or flageolet. The mouthpiece did not appear to include a reed. The 'uu' root may be onomatopoeic, suggesting the 'oo-oo' sound of a simple woodwind instrument.

Nebel [KJV 'psaltery'] (H5035)

The ***nebel*** and the ***kinnor*** are so similar in many passages of Scripture that it is difficult to make a hard distinction between them. They may designate two kinds of lyre, differentiated by the total number of strings employed or possibly by the density (or tone) of the strings, which were made from the intestines of sheep. The wood used in their construction in both cases would appear to have been a high quality hardwood. The ***nebel*** probably had a greater number of strings than a ***kinnor*** and may, in some instances, have been too large to carry or hold in one's hand. With thicker strings, and possibly even a sounding board or resonator, it would have been akin to our modern harp. Being louder than a ***kinnor***, with more bass notes, the ***nebel*** was very likely the main stringed instrument used in Temple worship.

Toph [KJV 'tabret'] (H8596)

Like many musical instruments mentioned in the Bible, the ***toph*** is not easy to identify with certainty. The KJV translates it as *tabret* or *timbrel* (i.e a tambourine) – being in essence a circular handheld band with small, loosely fitted metal disks or brass bells. These would have given a jangling sound as the instrument was shaken. It is never mentioned in connection with Temple music. In those instances in Scripture where it is employed as a solo instrument, with no other instrumental accompaniment, it is played only by women, notably by Miriam and her troupe of women after the crossing of the Red Sea and by Jephthah's daughter when she came out to welcome her father.

The ***toph*** may also have been a type of percussion instrument, since the root ('tp') may be onomatopoeic (imitating an actual sound, namely that of a drum). However, if that were the case it probably had only one membrane or tympanum, like the Irish bodhrán. It is very unlikely that the women who were responsible for gathering together the goods and utensils needed for their journey into the wilderness at the time of the Exodus would have included something as cumbersome as a drum. On the other hand, where an instrument had been included, it would likely have been lighter and more compact, like a tambourine or bodhrán.

Even when one takes the archaeological evidence into account, the argument that a ***toph*** was a drum in our modern sense is simply not tenable.

Halil [KJV 'pipe'] [H2485]

This is also a pipe but very likely of a more advanced kind than the Ugab developed by Jubal, given both the context and later time period in which it was used. The Septuagint translates it consistently as "aulos," the Greek for oboe. Thus it was likely a pipe with a double reed in the embouchure or mouthpiece. It could be made from wood, bone, bamboo, or metal, such as copper. The pitch of this instrument varies with its length, from the small piccolo oboe, with a soprano sound, to the regular oboe, cor anglais, and bass oboe. However, none of these featured in Temple worship.

Chatsotserah [KJV 'trumpet'] H2689

This instrument was expressly commissioned by God in Numbers, chapter 10. Initially only two were made, to be used exclusively by the priests (sons of Aaron) but not by the Levites. Each was made from a single piece of hammered silver. Unlike the horn trumpet (***shofar***), which was curled, the ***chatsotserah*** had a straight shaft. Like the words ***ugab*** and ***toph***, the word ***chatsotserah*** may be onomatopoeic, suggesting the sound made by the instrument. Scripture describes two of the actual sounds made by the silver trumpet, a powerful sustained sound called a ***tekiah*** and a shorter blast called a ***teruah***.

Shofar [KJV 'trumpet'] H7782

The ***shofar*** is mentioned more often than any other instrument in Scripture. It is made from the curled horn of a ram or sometimes from the longer horn of a wild goat. It was never made of wood or metal. When the trumpet of the LORD sounded loudly on Mount Sinai, the Hebrew word used was ***shofar***. The seven trumpets blown by the seven priests as they circled the city of Jericho were rams horn trumpets or ***shofarot***, as were the trumpets blown by the three hundred warriors who accompanied Gideon to the camp of the Midianites and Amalekites.

Metsseleth [KJV 'cymbals'] H4700 and ***Tselatsal*** [KJV 'cymbals'] H6767

The KJV translates these two words as "cymbals."

The root of the word ***tselatsal*** would appear to be onomatopoeic (as with ***ugab***, ***toph***, and ***chatsotserah***), namely "slsl", meaning to ring or tinkle. It appears twice in verse 5 of Psalm 150:

"Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals."

This may be referring to cymbals of the same kind but in different sizes, thus affecting both the volume and the pitch. Archeological evidence shows that the cymbals in use at that time never exceeded 12 cms in diameter (about 5 inches). The root word also denotes the buzzing or whirring of a locust swarm. As the swarm approached, the volume and pitch would change, as with the cymbals in this verse. The sound produced was probably similar to that of modern cymbals, held vertically and brushed together in a gliding motion.

The second instrument, ***metsseleth***, is mentioned only in the plural, indicating that it may have comprised two separate components. This too is suggestive of cymbals (as per the KJV).

How then do ***metsseleth*** differ from ***tselatsal***? Perhaps they differed only in how they were played. The parallel passages in 2 Samuel 6:5 and 1 Chronicles 13:8 – which describe the initial attempt by David to transfer the ark to Jerusalem – would suggest that the difference may not be significant since the first uses ***tselatsal*** and the second uses ***methseleth***.

Menaanim [KJV 'cornets'] H4517

This instrument is mentioned only once in Scripture, in the passage (2 Samuel 6:5) where David is attempting to bring the ark to Jerusalem. The KJV translates the word (which is plural) as cornets – small trumpets – even though the root of the word means to shake or tremble. Presumably the KJV translators were guided by the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 13:8:

"And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals." (2 Samuel 6:5)

"And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." (1 Chronicles 13:8)

The word ***menaanim*** may refer to a sistrum or clay rattle, which were in common use at the time. Archaeologists have found over 70 intact instruments of this kind. From an exegetical standpoint, 2 Samuel may be referring to the use of clay rattles without necessarily excluding the presence of small trumpets.

Other instruments

The pagan ensemble mandated by Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 3 of Daniel should be noted:

"That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:" (Daniel 3:5)

All the musical instruments, which are listed no fewer than four times, are given in Aramaic. Having regard to the root of the word in each instance, scholars usually translate them as follows:

Instrument	KJV	Modern suggestion
<i>qeren</i> (H7162)	"cornet" [horn]	horn
<i>mashrowqiy</i> (H4953)	"flute" [pipe]	pipe
<i>qiytharoc</i> (H7030)	"harp"	lyre
<i>cabbeka</i> (H5443)	"sackbut" [lyre]*	small harp
<i>picanteriyn</i> (H6460)	"psaltery" [psalterium]	zither
<i>cuwmpowneyah</i> (H5481)	"dulcimer"**	possibly a drum

*The word 'sackbut' was intended by the KJV translators to designate a small stringed instrument. Only later did 'sackbut' come to mean a type of trombone, a very different musical instrument.

** The KJV uses the word 'dulcimer' to denote what the translators took to be a double flute. Today we understand the word 'dulcimer' to denote a stringed instrument like a zither. Since a flute has already been mentioned the word *cuwmpowneyah* may designate a very different type of instrument. Given that this is a pagan ensemble, in which rhythmic drumming was fairly standard, the instrument in question may have been a drum or tympanum (which is not otherwise mentioned).

APPENDIX B

Verses from *The Psalms* regarding musical instruments and song

“Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.” (9:11)

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.” (28:7)

“Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.” (33:2)

“Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.” (33:3)

“And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.” (40:3)

“Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.” (42:8)

“Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.” (43:4)

“Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.” (47:6)

“For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.” (47:7)

“I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp.” (49:4)

“Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.” (57:8)

“Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.” (66:2)

“O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah.” (67:4)

“Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.” (68:4)

“The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.” (68:25)

“They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards.” (69:12)

“I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.” (69:30)

“I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel.” (71:22)

“My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed.” (71:23)

“I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.” (77:6)

“Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.” (81:1)

“Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.” (81:2)

“Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.” (81:3)

“Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.” (92:3)

“O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.” (95:1)

“O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.” (96:1)

“O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.” (98:1)

“Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.” (98:4)

“Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.” (98:5)

“With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.” (98:6)

“Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.” (105:2)

“O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.” (108:1)

“Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.” (108:2)

“The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.” (118:14)

“Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.” (135:3)

“We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.” (137:2)

“For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” (137:3)

“How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?” (137:4)

“I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.” (138:1)

“I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.” (144:9)

“Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.” (147:1)

“Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.” (147:7)

“Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.” (149:1)

“Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.” (149:3)

“Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.” (149:5)

“Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.” (150:3)

“Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.” (150:4)

“Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.” (150:5)